

Documents on Diplomacy: The Source

My Duty was Plain *A Dispatch from Charles Francis Adams to Secretary Seward, No. 8* *Legation of the United States, London, June 14, 1861*

Sir: I have to acknowledge the reception of your dispatch No. 10 . . . The intelligence of the feeling expressed in America upon the reception of the Queen's proclamation was fully expected by me, so that it excited no surprise, and much of the course of your argument in your dispatch will be found to have been already adopted in my conference with Lord John Russell, an account of which is before this time in your hands. . . . However this may be, my duty was plain. I applied for an interview with Lord John Russell. . . .

I next approached the most delicate portion of my task. I descanted upon the irritation produced in America by the Queen's proclamation, upon the construction almost universally given to it, as designed to aid the insurgents by raising them to the rank of a belligerent State, and upon the very decided tone taken by the President in my despatches in case any such design was really entertained. I added that from my own observation of what had since occurred here, I had not been able to convince myself of the existence of such a design. But it was not to be disguised that the fact of the continued stay of the pseudo commissioners in this city, and still more the knowledge that they had been admitted to more or less interviews with his lordship was calculated to excite uneasiness. Indeed, it had already given great dissatisfaction to my government. I added, as modestly as I could, that in all frankness any further protraction of this relation could scarcely fail to be

viewed by us as hostile in spirit, and to require some corresponding action accordingly.

His lordship then reviewed the course of Great Britain. He explained the mode in which they had consulted with France, prior to any action at all, as to the reception of the deputation from the so-called Confederate States. It had been the custom both in France and here to receive such persons unofficially for a long time back. Poles, Hungarians, Italians, &c., &c., had been allowed interviews, to hear what they had to say. But this did not imply recognition in their case any more than in ours. He added that he had seen the gentlemen once some time ago, and once more some time since; he had no expectation of seeing them any more. . . .

I did not touch at all on the subject of the blockade, as referred to in your dispatch No. 10, for the reason that I do not now understand the government as disposed in any way to question its validity or to obstruct it. On the contrary, his lordship incidentally referring to it in this interview, said that instructions had been sent out to the naval officers in command to respect it, and never themselves to seek to enter any of the ports blockaded, unless from some urgent necessity to protect British persons or property.

I have the honor to be, sir, your obedient servant.

CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS

Source

United States Department of State, *Message of the President of the United States to the two houses of Congress, at the commencement of the second session of the thirty-seventh congress*, Vol. I [Washington, D.C.: 1861]

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